

Poster Presentation for the 197<sup>th</sup> meeting of the American Astronomical Society, January 7-11, 2001 in San Diego:

**Title:**

Light, Waves and Interference: Tools for the Quest for Extrasolar Planets

**Authors:**

Rudolf Danner & Rhonda Hines  
Jet Propulsion Laboratory  
California Institute of Technology  
4800 Oak Grove Drive  
Pasadena, CA 91001

**Abstract:**

Are there habitable planets around other stars than the Sun? is one of the fundamental questions NASA's Origins program aims to answer. At the threshold of the new millennium optical and infrared interferometry, a technique to combine light from separate telescopes as if they were pieces of one much larger telescope, promises to bring within reach a scientific answer to this question.

Simply posing such an intriguing question, let alone considering the impact a scientific answer might have, generally captures the imagination of students instantly. But how can we build on this excitement to create new learning opportunities and enrich current curricula in the sciences, mathematics and other subjects?

Our poster presents an overview of the outreach program of NASA's Planet Finder Program at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. We will showcase some of our recent products such as a set of classroom activities targeted at middle school math students, the "Origins Explorers" a cartoon guide to interferometry and our long-time favorite pocket interferometer. We will also illustrate our overall approach to educational outreach that is firmly rooted in the national science education standards and the commitment to be responsive to the needs of the educational community.